

\70\myhands (and \71\mayday)

March 29, 1998

A student at Blair High School asks me, Would I have released the Pentagon Papers if I had not gone to Vietnam?

Good question. Probably not, I say. I can read about the victims in Rwanda, even see pictures of children in newspapers, but I don't know them, haven't seen them face to face, they aren't fully real to me. A shift from that state to a different one is happening just this week for Clinton in Rwanda.

The papers the day before report Clinton's remarks to survivors of the 1994 massacre, at the airport in Rwanda. He says while the massacre was happening there "people like me" sitting in offices all over the world didn't fully appreciate the depth and scale of it, although as the paper noted the killing was widely reported. Actually it was not people like him, it was him, he was the most important one in blocking action by the UN. But it's true that it wasn't only him, and to do him justice he did include himself.

Now suddenly that has changed for Clinton. (It must be more than that he is there. A quick visit of a few days, in this case hours, the presence of crowds, talks with officials, doesn't

usually make a difference. It didn't for McNamara, or any of his colleagues. Again give Clinton credit, his eyes and ears were open. And his heart).

At the end of his talk at the airport, "Mr. Clinton then looked up and declared with emotion: 'When you look at those children who greeted us as we got off that plane today, how could anyone say they did not want those children to have a chance to have their own children? To experience the joy of another morning sunrise? To learn the normal lessons of life? To give something back to their people?'"

(Those were pretty much my thoughts as I saw the young Japanese children in Hiroshima on August 6, 1995). An important recognition, and a very unusual acknowledgement that it had waited a long time to arrive for him, too late to save the children who died. How could anyone, how could I, how could we?

Unlike most of my former colleagues in Washington, I had been in Vietnam for months and years, seen the children there. I wrote home within a month of arriving in 1965, "I've never seen children anywhere so pretty, so funny, so playful. Walk down a road in a hamlet and within a few moments a little hand is slipping into yours..." I had Vietnamese friends, real friends. They existed for me in a way that Biafrans, say, did not.

One day in 1970 I was walking down Mass Ave in Harvard Square, across from the Yard, past shops I had known since I came to college over twenty years before. In the window of one of them a poster stopped me. It was light green, mounted on cardboard, with a drawing of a Vietnamese woman wearing a black peasant dress, holding a child by the hand. Next to the drawing were the words,

"There came a time when the people of Vietnam were as real to me as my two hands."

Those were the only words. It sounded like a quotation, but there was no indication who the "me" was. I stood on the sidewalk looking at the poster while people walked past me, thinking, "That's the way I feel. That's true for me." I can't think of that moment without tears coming to my eyes, as they did then.

Sometimes I've wondered about the person who made that poster, how those words came to her, how they had become true for her, and who brought it to the shop, who put it in that window. It was a movement. That was the good thing about those years.

I had copied the Pentagon Papers almost a year earlier, but the Senate hadn't put them out, the war was going on and getting larger under Nixon, it seemed less and less likely that putting out a history of the war under Johnson and Kennedy and Eisenhower would make any difference but the question was what would, what to do

next? Things like this would happen and remind me to try something else, kick me along. I guess that's what the people who put that poster in the windows of bookstores and coffeeshops were hoping for.

MAYDAY, 1971

Another memory, a year later. Rennie Davis had called for a big demonstration in Washington on Mayday, enough people to shut down the streets. The slogan was, "If they won't stop the war, we'll stop the government." A group of us in Cambridge who got together to consider what to do next, an "affinity group" including Howard Zinn and Noam Chomsky, wondered whether we should endorse this in Boston and encourage people to go down to Washington.

What did it mean, "stop the government"? Were they planning violence, like the Weathermen? Was it well planned, was it likely to get out of control? There was talk in the movement press that there would be "mobile tactics." What did that mean, beyond not sitting still waiting to be arrested? Did it mean overturning cars, putting barrels in the streets, throwing things?

Someone volunteered to go down to Washington and scout it out, and when he returned he reported that it was hard to predict. No one wanted violence, they were mainly going to sit in the streets, but it didn't seem very well organized. It was hard for us to decide whether we wanted to go down ourselves. We didn't want to take part in another Chicago.

I still hadn't decided when I attended a rally at Brandeis at which I was scheduled to speak, a couple of days before Mayday.

The Pentagon Papers hadn't come out yet, that was six weeks away. I myself didn't know that the New York Times had a big secret effort underway to bring that about. Neil Sheehan had chosen not to tell me that, so I was still looking for members of Congress who might make them public and trying to find other things that were worth doing. Nothing looked very promising. Probably I was asked to speak at Brandeis because my article in the New York Review of Books, "Murder in Laos," had just come out on what Nixon was up to.

The auditorium in Brandeis was packed, people were sitting in all the aisles and stairways, there was very high energy. I never planned what I was going to say beforehand, and as I got near the end of my comments I started talking about the possible usefulness of nonviolent civil disobedience. I hadn't actually done any myself, yet (except for copying the Pentagon Papers, and my earlier leaks), though I'd been reading about it for three years.

But I got carried away. The thought came into my mind of a line in Little Big Man, in which Dustin Hoffman played an old Indian reminiscing about his long life, which had included surviving the massacre at Wounded Knee. The analogies to Vietnam were on everyone's mind. The movie had been out for a while but I had just seen it, and I asked how many there had seen it. Nearly everyone had.

I said, "You remember the line that goes through the movie, a saying of the Lakota, the Sioux, just before they go into a battle: 'Come, brothers, this is a good day to die.'

"Well, the truth is, it's never really a good day to die. But I think that May 1 is a good day to get arrested in Washington."

There was a wild response. Everybody got up to their feet and applauded and hollered. I went home and said to Patricia, "Well, it seems that I'm going to Washington." I told her what I had said, and that I obviously couldn't call on people to go down and get arrested in Washington and not be there myself. It turned out the rest of our affinity group had each come to the same conclusion, despite their earlier doubts, so we went down together.

We got down to Washington late in the evening. The organizers had been working to find places for everyone to stay, schools and churches and homes, for thousands of people. We were directed to someone's home, and by the time we got there people were already trying to sleep, so there wasn't much light. The beds and couches were all taken, there were people lying on all the floors, some in sleeping bags, or just on rugs or the bare floor. We found places to lie on the floor of a basement recreation room and slept for a few hours.

By about 4:30 everyone was up, getting ready. The light was

still dim, there was only one orangy lamp in the basement room. Young people, mostly in their late teens or early twenties, were filling water bottles and putting food in small packs, brushing their teeth, writing numbers on the backs of their hands of a lawyer to call when they got arrested. They were quiet and businesslike, focussed, they didn't want to be late or hold anyone up.

It reminded me very much of the dim lights in the hold of a troopship, at 4 in the morning on the day of an amphibious landing exercise, the troops in the narrow aisles between the four-high bunks adjusting their web gear and packs and getting ready to go over the side. I suspected that underneath, the young people in Washington felt very much like the troops did before they went down the cargo nets on the side of a ship into a heaving landing boat. Apprehensive, excited. None of them had ever been arrested before, any more than I had, and they didn't know how they were going to do or how the police were going to act. But none of this showed.

I was very impressed. I felt proud of Americans that day. I was completely reassured about how it would go, at least from their side, and glad to be part of this. It was still dark when we went outside, prepared to walk downtown if we had to, but as soon as we got to the corner a taxi stopped for us. A black woman was driving and she asked if we were going to the demonstration. When we said we were she said she wouldn't charge us. She'd read about the

event in the papers, and this was the second load she'd ferried over. We heard later that all over town taxis were doing this, especially ones driven by blacks. Ordinary drivers on their way to work were giving rides, too, when they saw groups of young people heading downtown.

The taxi driver dropped us at the Washington Monument, and the first people I saw when I got out were Dr. Spock and Barbara Deming. I had brought a book with me to read in jail, if they let us take books into the cell, and the book I had picked was Barbara Deming's Revolution and Equilibrium. It had brought me here, as much as anything else. I had read it two or three times by then and this seemed like a good time to read it again. I recognised her from a snapshot in the book. I went over and showed it to her, and asked her to sign it, which she did.

Looking at the title page now I see that I didn't ask Spock to sign it, standing beside her, but it was her book. But later others in our affinity group did sign it. Howard Zinn. Marilyn Young. Fred Branfmann. Mitchell Goodman. Noam Chomsky. Zelda Gamson. Cindy Frederick. Mark Ptashne. A good group. We had been maced and tear-gassed by the time they signed, which made their writing unsteady, and several of the comments referred to that. But as Mitch Goodman wrote, it was a good day.

It was light by now, overcast and gray. On the other side of

the Washington Monument we could see troops in field gear, with helmets. They looked to me like Marines, and I went up by myself to see who they were. I talked to a couple of them and I was shocked to learn that they were Fleet Marine Force troops from my old division, the Second Marine Division, brought up from Camp Lejeune, North Carolina. I looked around and saw how young they were, even the platoon leaders, like the people I had woken up with that morning. They looked familiar to me, family. I felt bad to see them here, at a monument to Washington, doing this. It wasn't right to give Marines this kind of duty.

Apparently some of them felt the same way. They were holding rifles with one hand and giving us the peace sign with the other. Just then a convoy of troops in busses went by and nearly every one of them at the windows raised their hands and gave us the peace sign.

Back at 14th Street, knots of people were standing on the grass in front of the Monument, and it seemed time to get started, whatever we were going to do. Cars were going past toward the 14th Street bridge, not a steady stream of them, one at a time. They were going at a pretty good clip, but we figured they could see us ahead, and they wouldn't want to hit us. They were going in the general direction of the Pentagon, in Arlington across the Potomac, so this seemed like a logical spot to stop traffic.

Our affinity group moved off the sidewalk and sat down in the middle of the street, in a circle facing outward, shoulders touching. A couple of cars went around us, slowing down. We could see police a block or two away, pushing people back onto the sidewalks. Clouds of tear gas were drifting toward us from some grenades the police had thrown into the street where people had been sitting. Then we saw a policeman in full gear just across from us on the Monument side pull down a long plastic mask in front of his face and start for us. He was drawing a can of Mace from his belt.

At the same time another policeman was coming at us from the direction of the bridge, holding a long club. His plastic mask was tilted back on top of his helmet, and he was raising the club as he got close. They were coming at us at right angles to each other. We looked at each other, and apparently we all had the same thought, it was too early in the morning to get arrested. We had just sat down, five minutes before. Somebody said, "Let's go," and we all scrambled up and moved off onto the Mall side of the street just as the cops converged on us.

The policeman coming up from the south was leaning forward with his club raised high above his head and the policeman with the mask on sprayed his Mace at us, only we weren't there any more and the spray hit the other cop, who had his mask tilted back, square in the left side of his face. He staggered and dropped his club,

his helmet fell off as he held his face in his hands. His club bounced on the pavement alongside his helmet. The cop who had maced him put his arm around him to hold him up, not paying attention to us anymore as we watched from the sidewalk for a moment before we began moving back into the Mall, not having to run.

I see all this in my mind in slow motion, which was the way it seemed at the time, like a ballet, perfectly coordinated. It was wonderful. Our getting up all together just as the policemen got to us was very graceful, as if we had practiced it over and over, with the cops, getting the timing just right, and as if they had rehearsed their movements many times too. I can see the club and the helmet falling down and the helmet rocking on the pavement, and the policeman who had shot the Mace holding the other one, who had gotten it instead of us, by the shoulders.

Now that we had all discovered the meaning of "mobile tactics" we looked for the next place to do the same thing again. We did it a couple more times, of course never again with such amazing results. But we did stop traffic, briefly. The other streets we tried were narrower, the cars tended to stop in front of us instead of trying to go around. When policemen got close we got up and moved off. The police got the traffic moving again, they didn't try to run after us. If they had, we wouldn't have run or resisted arrest. We were all academics, of one sort or another.

Still, it was very unusual behavior for us, or for anyone. There was an exciting edge to it, picking a spot and acting in unison, especially at first when we weren't sure how the cars or the police would act. It was unusual for the drivers, too, I suppose, which was partly the point of the day. It wasn't business as usual. We were actually slowing traffic a bit, from the cumulative effects of all the little bands of people moving into the streets in the way of the cars and the police coming after them.

It was a company town and most of the people in these cars were on their way to doing the normal business of the government, which among other things meant pursuing the war in Vietnam, even if the people in the particular cars we were stopping weren't working directly on that. So in an unusual way we them a little pause on their way to work, time to think. To think, conceivably, about the work they were trying to be on time for, and why some people would behave this way to try to stop it.

What did they really think about, while they waited for the police to come? Only how irritating this was and we were, wasting their time? Not all of them, surely. Not the ones who had given us rides, for example, or the ones who honked and smiled and waved the V-sign at us out their windows. There were quite a few of those.

On one side street, in front of a ramp that funneled traffic to an underpass beneath some buildings, we actually stopped a line of cars for quite a while before a policeman found us. By that time we weren't expecting to be pursued or arrested, we just got up when he came up to us and went over to the corner and began walking up the street. He seemed to be following us, because I could hear Fred Branfman behind me saying something to him.

I turned around to hear what they were talking about. The policeman was a middle-aged man wearing an ordinary uniform, no helmet or mask, with a noncommittal expression. Just as I looked at him as Fred was talking to him, he held up a can of Mace at eye-level and shot it at me. It went past Fred's head directly into my eyes. He did this very calmly. It was the last thing I remember seeing for several minutes.

I had been tear-gassed before, that morning in fact, and in Marine training I had spent minutes in a tear-gas chamber without a mask, but this was a different experience. I couldn't see anything, and I was totally disoriented. I didn't know where I was. Someone was holding on to me, holding me upright. It was the kind of effect I'd read about, with Mace. When I could talk, what I said was, "God, that's good Mace!" As if I were a connoisseur. I meant, it was a product that really worked the way it was supposed to, the way it was advertised.

After spraying me the policeman had turned back from us and gone somewhere else. I had a feeling that Fred must have provoked him somehow, even though his motion in raising the can had been very matter-of-fact and he had seemed to be aiming at me, not Fred. After a few more minutes, when the spinning slowed down and I could get another sentence out, I asked, "What was it you had just said to him, Fred?"

Fred said, "I was telling him that we had nothing personal against him or what he was doing, we knew he was just doing his job, it was the war we opposed."

I said, "Hmnmn." That didn't sound very provocative, but maybe the policeman hadn't been listening closely. Anyway I said, "Maybe it doesn't pay to talk to them, in this situation." I was still weaving as I walked, people were holding on to me. I was impressed with the Mace.

By this time in the morning, we were ready to get arrested, but the policemen didn't seem interested in making arrests. They had pretty well scattered the demonstrators, so traffic was flowing fairly normally on the main streets. The demonstration seemed to be over. As far as we had seen, no one had been arrested at all. We sat and talked for a while in Lafayette Park across from the White House. No other groups were in sight.

Someone called up I.F. Stone from a payphone and arranged for us to meet him at a Chinese restaurant for lunch. We decided we would split after lunch. Noam flew off to Texas to an event at a GI coffeehouse, one of the centers supporting resistance to the war within the Army, which he had had to turn down earlier because we expected to be in jail. I took the shuttle to New York to go to a lecture at the Council on Foreign Relations by McGeorge Bundy, which I had thought I would have to miss. It was the first of three lectures he was scheduled to give there, to be published as a book. Someone said it was his bid to be considered for Secretary of State in the next Democratic administration, after he left the Ford Foundation.

I went from LaGuardia to Patricia's apartment in New York, where I had could take a shower and put on a suit. I had to scrub down more than usual. My hair, like all the clothes I'd been wearing, was saturated with the smell of tear gas and Mace. After washing that out of my hair and putting on clean clothes I turned up at the Council on Foreign Relations late that afternoon, along with a crowd of former bosses and colleagues from the Pentagon, the State Department and the Embassy in Saigon. The whole Vietnam Establishment was there to listen to Bundy, all the former ambassadors and cabinet officials. It was like the defense dock at Nuremberg, except that like my affinity group that morning, none of these people had been arrested.

That wouldn't have remained true for me if I'd stayed in Washington that afternoon. After breaking the demonstration by later morning and restoring the flow of traffic without arresting many people, the police had started making mass arrests about the time we were having lunch. If we'd known that, we would have stayed together. But it no longer had anything to do with the morning's demonstration, which was over. The police made no effort to find out whether the people they were grabbing had had anything to do with the demonstration, which most of them hadn't. The cops were now just sweeping young people off the streets, especially in the area of Georgetown University, though it hadn't even been a locus for stopping traffic that morning.

It was easy to get arrested in Washington that afternoon. All you had to do was to walk down the street in Georgetown, if you were young and had long hair. Tourists, students between classes, shoppers, some Congressmen's sons, all got swept up if they fit that profile. No one in our affinity group was very young or had long hair, but they wouldn't have left us out. Howard Zinn had stayed in Washington, and all he had to do was what Fred Branfman had done earlier. He spoke to a policeman, who was pulling some young people off the sidewalk into a van. Howard asked, "Why are you arresting these people?" and got arrested along with them.

13,000 people were arrested in Washington that afternoon and evening. There were too many to put in jail, so they were held in

Robert F. Kennedy Stadium. The police had no evidence on any of them that they had ever been in an antiwar protest or done anything illegal, except for ones they knew like Abbie Hoffman, who had his nose bashed in again by a two-by-four in the course of his arrest. Most of them probably hadn't been protestors at all, at least before that, though the night in RFK Stadium might have given some of them some good ideas. Many years later they got a small settlement for false arrest after a class action suit.

But I didn't know any of this as I listened to Bundy in New York, while it was happening. Bundy's lectures were never published in the end, (so I can't consult them to refresh my memory of what he said) because the Pentagon Papers came out six weeks later, covering the same period he was talking about and making his account of things look rather misleading. (His brother's book had the same fate. Bill Bundy was writing a book at the Center for International Studies at MIT, same as me. He was relying in part on access to his own copy of the Pentagon Papers, which he intended to use rather selectively however. When his research assistant showed me, sub rosa, his draft account of Tonkin Gulf, I asked him, "How could he have written this, this way?" He said, "Bill sweated blood over that chapter." But then the Pentagon Papers came out, and his book never did).

I recall McGeorge Bundy that afternoon saying, for example, that there had been "no intent to mislead Congress" in connection

with the passage of the Tonkin Gulf Resolution. (Bill said the same thing in his book draft). I remember thinking to myself as he said that and other things like it, "Oh, man, Bundy" (I didn't know him well enough to call him "Mac," even in my thoughts, till the last couple years of his life), "don't do this. Don't keep saying things like this in public. It's too late, this stuff is going to be coming out soon."

But I was detached about it. I wasn't relying on McGeorge Bundy, or Bill for that matter, to set the country straight about our history in Vietnam. Still, it was a surreal experience, after a morning of mobile tactics on 14th St., sitting in a room surrounded by my fellow war criminals listening to Johnson's Assistant for National Security tell lies about the war.

\Mayday.II

April 19, 1998

A day later, Howard Zinn was the last speaker at a large rally in Boston Common. I was at the back of a huge crowd, listening to him over loudspeakers. 27 years later, I can remember some things he said. "On Mayday in Washington thousands of us were arrested for disturbing the peace. But there is no peace. We were really arrested because we were disturbing the war."

He said, "If Thomas Jefferson and Alexander Hamilton had been walking the streets of Georgetown yesterday, they would have been arrested. Arrested for being young."

At the end of his comments he said, "I want to speak now to some of the members of this audience, the plainclothes policemen among us, the military intelligence agents who are assigned to do surveillance. You are taking the part of secret police, spying on your fellow Americans. You should not be doing what you are doing. You should rethink it, and stop. You do not have to carry out orders that go against the grain of what it means to be an American."

Those last weren't his exact words, but that was the spirit of them. He was to pay for that comment the next day, when we were sitting side by side in a blockade of the Federal Building in Boston. We had a circle of people all the way around the building,

shoulder to shoulder, so no one could get in or out except by stepping over us. Behind us were crowds of people with posters who were supporting us but who hadn't chosen to risk arrest. In front of us, keeping us from getting any closer to the main entrance to the building, was a line of policemen, with a large formation of police behind them. All the police had large plastic masks tilted back on their heads and they were carrying long black clubs, about four feet long, like large baseball bats. Later the lawyers told us that city police regulations outlawed the use of batons that long.

But at first the relations with the police were almost friendly. We sat down impudently at the very feet of the policemen who were guarding the entrance, filling in the line that disappeared around the sides until someone came from the rear of the building and announced over a bullhorn, "The blockade is complete. We've surrounded the building!" There was a cheer from the crowd behind us, and more people joined us in sitting until the circle was two or three deep.

We expected them to start arresting us, but for a while the police did nothing. They could have manhandled a passage through the line and kept it open for employees to go in or out, but for some reason they didn't. We thought maybe they really sympathised with our protest, and this was their way of joining in. As the morning wore on, people took apples and crackers and bottles of

water out of their pockets and packs and shared them around, and they always offered some to the police standing in front of us. The police always refused, but they seemed to appreciate the offer.

Then one of the officers came over to Howard and said, "You're Professor Zinn, aren't you?" Howard said yes, and the officer reached down and shook his hand enthusiastically. He said, "I heard you lecture at the Police Academy. A lot of us here did. That was a wonderful lecture." Howard had been asked to speak to them about the role of dissent and civil disobedience in American history. Several other policemen came over to pay their respects to Howard and thank him for his lecture. The mood seemed quite a bit different from Washington.

Then a line of employees emerged from the building, wearing coats and ties or dresses. Their arms were raised and they were holding cards in their raised hands. As they circled past us they hold out the cards so we could see what they were: ID cards, showing they were federal employees. They were making the peace-sign with their other hands, they were circling around the building to show solidarity with what we were doing. Their spokesman said over a bullhorn, "We want this war to be over, too! Thank you for what you are doing! Keep it up." Photographers, including police, were scrambling to take pictures of them, and some of them held up their ID cards so they would get in the picture. It was the high point of the day.

A little while after the employees had gone back inside the building, there was a sudden shift in the mood of the police. An order had been passed. The bloc of police in the center of the square got into tight formation and lowered their plastic helmets. The police standing right in front of us, over us, straightened up, adjusted their uniforms and lowered their masks. Apparently the time had come to start arrests. The supporters who didn't want to be arrested fell back.

But there was no arrest warning. There was a whistle, and the line of police began inching forward, black batons raised upright. They were going to walk through us or over us, push us back. The man in front of us, who had been talking to Howard about his lecture a little earlier, muttered to us under his breath, "Leave! Now! Quick, get up." He was warning, not menacing us.

Howard and I looked at each other. We'd come expecting to get arrested. It didn't seem right to just get up and move because someone told us to, without arresting us. We stayed where we were. No one else left either. Boots were touching our shoes. The voice over our heads whispered intensely, "Move! Please. For God's sake, move!" Knees in uniform pressed our knees. I saw a club coming down. I put my hands over my head, fists clenched, and a four-foot baton hit my wrist, hard. Another one hit my shoulder.

I rolled over, keeping my arms over my head, got up and moved

back a few yards. Howard was being hauled off by several policemen. One had Howard's arms pinned behind him, another had jerked his head back by the hair. Someone had ripped his shirt in two, there was blood on his bare chest. A moment before he had been sitting next to me and I waited for someone to do the same to me, but no one did. I didn't see anyone else getting arrested. But no one was sitting anymore, the line had been broken, disintegrated. Those who had been sitting hadn't moved very far, they were standing like me a few yards back, looking around, holding themselves where they'd been clubbed. The police had stopped moving. They stood in a line, helmets still down, slapping their batons against their hands. Their adrenaline was still up, but they were standing in place.

Blood was running down my hand, covering the back of my hand. I was wearing a Rolex and it had taken the force of the blow. The baton had smashed the crystal and driven pieces of glass into my wrist. Blood was dripping off my fingers. Someone gave me a handkerchief to wrap around my wrist and told me to raise my arm. The handkerchief got soaked quickly and blood was running down my arm while I looked for a first-aid station that was supposed to be at the back of the crowd, in a corner of the square. I finally found it and someone picked the glass out of my arm and put a thick bandage around it. I'd moved my watch to the other arm. It was still running, keeping time, without a crystal. That was

impressive.¹

I went back to the protest. My shoulder was aching. The police were standing where they had stopped, and the blockade had reformed, people were sitting ten yards back from where they had been before. There seemed to be more people sitting, not fewer. Many of the supporters had joined in. But it was quiet. No one was speaking loudly, no laughing. People were waiting for the police to move forward again. They weren't expecting any longer to get arrested.

Only three or four people had been picked out of the line to be arrested before. The police had made a decision (it turned out) to arrest only the "leaders," not to give us the publicity of arrests and trials. Howard hadn't been an organizer of this action, he was just participating like the rest of us, but from the way they treated him when they pulled him out of the line, his comments directly to the police in the rally the day before must have rubbed someone the wrong way.¹

I found Roz Zinn, Howard's wife, sitting in the line on the

¹ An ad campaign for Rolex watches had been appearing for a while featuring pictures and stories of Rolexes that had been through severe challenges and kept running. Watches that were keeping perfect time on being removed from the bellies of sharks, and so forth. I thought I had the makings of a good ad here--"This Rolex was struck by a Boston policeman with a four-foot baton, and kept on running." But I never got around to notifying the company after I'd replaced the crystal.

side at right angles to where Howard and I had been before. I sat down between her and her housemate, a woman her age. They had been in support before [check this] till they had seen what happened to Howard.

Looking at the police in formation, with their uniforms and clubs, guns on their hips, I felt naked. I knew that it was an illusion in combat to think you were protected because you were carrying a weapon, but it was an illusion that worked. For the first time, I was very conscious of being unarmed. At last, in my own country, I understood what a Vietnamese villager must have felt at what the Marines called a "county fair," when the Marines rounded up everyone they could find in a hamlet--all women and children and old people, never draft- or VC-age young men--to be questioned one at a time in a tent, meanwhile passing out candy to the kids and giving vaccinations. Winning hearts and minds, trying to recruit informers. No one among the villagers knowing what the soldiers, in their combat gear, would do next, or which of them might be detained. We sat and talked and waited for the police to come again.

They lowered their helmets and formed up. The two women I was with were both older than I was. I moved my body in front of them, to take the first blows. I felt a hand on my elbow. "Excuse me, I was sitting there," the woman who shared the Zinn's house said to me, with a cold look. She hadn't come there that day and sat down,

she told me later, to be protected by me. I apologized and scrambled back, behind them.

No one moved. The police didn't move, either. They stood in formation facing us, plastic masks over their faces, for quite a while. But they didn't come forward again.

They had kept open a passage in front for the employees inside to leave after five, and eventually the police left, and we left.

END NOTES

1. Presumably it wasn't one of the officers who had been coming over that morning to be friendly to him. On the other hand, I'd seen compartmentation of feelings at work, I'd felt it on my shoulder and wrist. One of the clubs that hit me had to have been swung by the man who, a second before, had been whispering at us, warning us. He was begging us not to make him do this to us. But he didn't pull his punch a moment later. And he might not have been just obeying orders at that point. We hadn't made it easy for him, we had left him, he probably felt, no choice despite his plea. He might have felt fury. In any case, he did his job. And if it wasn't his club I felt, it was that of a man next to him. They'd all been friendly with us minutes and hours before, tacitly fraternizing, until they got the order to carry out a maneuver they must have practiced, clubbing us in lieu of arrest. Straightening their uniforms and their backs, lowering their helmets, amazingly quickly put them, as we would say in California, in a different space.

A dozen years later, I saw an instant's transformation on command like that, from friendly to maniacal, in a German shepherd police dog on the end of a chain leash, jaws slavering inches from my face. That was at a Pershing missile base at Bitburg, Germany. I mentioned to reporters afterward that the police dogs that day had not put the best face on the New Germany. But I had learned from Stanley Milgram's work by that time, and before that at the Boston Federal Building, that you didn't have to be a dog, or German, to act like that.